

# Ames Historical Society

AMES • IOWA

FOUNDED 1980 AS AMES HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

## Newsletter to Members 2005 SUMMER...ISSUE #3/4

*The mission of the Ames Historical Society is to preserve local history and illuminate its stories.*



*Sarah Emery was 20 years old when she became the first teacher at Hoggatt School. This was two years prior to the establishment of Ames in 1864.*

### Ames Historical Society Board:

**President** Kathy Svec  
**Vice-President** Janet Jepeway  
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### Members:

Roger Coulson, Leo Lawler, Dennis Wendell, Margaret Elbert Benson, Catherine Hunt, Carole Jensen, Dottie Tschopp McGee, Cynthia Bennet, Peggy Baer

The Board meets the second Monday of each month at City Hall.

Ames Historical Society is an incorporated, 501C3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in state and local history through publications, programs, exhibitions and operation of an archive and historic site.

**Headqtrs:** 108 5<sup>th</sup>, Ames, Iowa 50010  
**Mail:** PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010  
**Phone:** 515-232- 2148  
**E-mail:** ameshistorical@qwest.net  
**Website:** www.ameshistoricalsociety.org

The newsletter is published four times a year for AHS members. Comments & questions may be directed to: Editor, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010 or e-mail above.

Hoggatt School is located on the grounds of Meeker School, near 18<sup>th</sup> and Burnett, Ames, IA. Open April 1 through October 31.

## Hoggatt School - no attendance, no tests! Open regular weekend hours through Aug. 28



Authentic furnishings, faithful reproductions and knowledgeable hosts give visitors a taste of school life in the Civil War-era. Hoggatt School was built in 1862 to educate the children of early area pioneers.

Give yourself, your children, grandchildren and friends the chance to be charmed by this carefully preserved chapter from the past.



Open hours are Saturdays and Sundays, 2 to 4:30pm through August 29, 2005. The school is located at 18<sup>th</sup> and Burnett on the grounds of Meeker School. Specially arranged tours are available through October 31 by calling Carole Jensen at 515-233-2431. (That's Carole in the top picture!)



## Ames Stories – Interesting Tales & Unique Chapters in Local History

### Join The Mericles, Reminiscing About Ames and WW II

*First, by Eileen, and then Morrie Mericle, Ames*

Come with me; we're going back in time to an Ames without pizza! There were no Mexican restaurants here either. You would have had to drive all the way to Texas to buy fresh tamales (my favorite ) back then.

There was NO Sunday shopping, no Wal-Marts, not even a McDonald's (of which Ames now has three).

Gas rationing came. Cars all but disappeared off the roads and those left were obliged to drive at a top speed of 35 mph, which was okay because there were no freeways yet anyway.

Liquor-by-the-drink was unheard of, as was gambling. That's what "sinful" people did in far off Las Vegas (Lost Wages), a place akin to Sodom and Gomorrah mentioned in the Bible.

To see a man with a tattoo was a rare occurrence, except once a year when the carnival men worked the rides at the Iowa State Fair. Tattoos were something that sailors sometimes got when they went overseas. Who could guess that within a period of forty years there would be a thriving tattoo parlor right in Ames or some thirty establishments serving mixed drinks and wine--even on Sundays!

My husband, Morrie, who is a decade older, says that World War II drastically changed the Iowa that he grew up in. Long cherished values and customs were turned topsy-turvy. With the advent of the military draft, young service men were eloping after weekend romances--hoping to taste a little pleasure before death or disfigurement came. Some unscrupulous women married three or more times, hoping to collect on widow's benefits. My cousin married such a woman, but didn't live to discover it.

Fort Des Moines became the central training ground for women who would serve in the Armed Services, and Iowa State College, likewise, became a central training ground for college men preparing to be officers, those who had done well on the EDY tests.

Service men and male college students hitchhiked, and savvy ones memorized the 99 counties because, back then, the county numbers were on the license plates. (Students would watch for a car headed toward the county of their desired destination.)

Instead of watching TV (which didn't come along until around 1950) women got together and rolled bandages and knitted socks for soldiers.

Women had to give up nylon and silk stockings too so they took turns painting stocking seams down each other's legs.

Ames had a couple of diners and motor courts, but our seventeen chain motels were non-existent until quite recent times.

Meat and sugar were rationed as was candy and chewing gum. If a kid got a piece of gum he/she saved it for weeks--long after the flavor was just a memory.



Cars return to Main Street, Ames, 1947 (F.T. Brown photo)

By the time I arrived in Ames in the fall of 1960 there was still no liquor-by-the-drink in Ames. A man would pick up a bottle at the local state liquor store, where his purchases were recorded in his liquor book. He would pick up his dinner date and they would carry their bottle to a nice restaurant and once there, order two setups. You paid a dollar each for a glass with ice in it.

I had grown up in California and had seen liquor bottles in the grocery stores since I was little, so this Iowa custom was quite a shock to me.

When I signed up for some Iowa State college courses in 1960, my quarterly tuition was \$45. I stood for a solid hour and watched the huge Foucault pendulum swinging to and fro in Beardshear Hall. Then I climbed the stairs to the third floor to see a painting by Hals that showed a smiling highwayman clutching the breast of a bawdy barmaid (very naughty).

Alas, both these delights soon thereafter disappeared never to return.

People whose books I had read began to visit the Iowa State campus. I could actually talk sit and with Richard Llewellyn (author of my favorite novel, *How Green Was My Valley*) or Wystan H. Auden (famous poet).



All during the Sixties there was a program in the Oak Room of the Memorial Union every Thursday at 4 PM called Books and Coffee (above). College professors from various disciplines would spend an hour reviewing a book for anyone who cared to attend. I felt so lucky to be a small part of such a sophisticated school.

In 1972 an Oscar-winning movie actress, Shirley MacLaine came and talked at the Younkers store on Main Street in favor of George McGovern's presidential bid. Ten years later I got another thrill when Jane Fonda made an appearance at Stephens Auditorium supporting her then-husband's, Tom Hayden's People's Party. I still chuckle when I think of Gerald Ford's comment in 1975 in front of Hilton Coliseum. He said he was so happy to be here in Idaho. (I think he lost the Iowa vote that afternoon.)

These are just a few random memories. I look forward to reading what others remember from Ames' past. Shopping at Tilden's! Getting your gas pumped for you and your windows washed at every gas station! Paying 46 cents for a gallon of gas!

Photo above – loaned by Memorial Union

## Now It's Morrie's Turn...

*By Morrie Mericle*

In 1943 and 1944, during WWII, Ames was dominated by the presence of thousands of military personnel. Prior to the wartime period the population was around 10000, of which around 6000 were students at Iowa State College. That meant that Ames was a small place, essentially bounded on the east by a few buildings west of the river, on the south by a few blocks south of Lincoln Way, on the north by about 13<sup>th</sup> street, and on the west by a few buildings just west of the campus.

By the time I arrived in 1943, most of the predominately male campus over the age of 18 had left and the campus population of civilians was rather small. To take

the place of the departed students, the campus was filled with servicemen and others in various training programs.

At the east end of the campus, there were several hundred V5 cadets. These were doing preflight study for the Navy Flight training. Also in those small dormitories were another group of ASTP trainees (Army Specialized Training Program). This latter program was often depleted as many were shipped to replacement depots (reppo-depos) because of war exigency.

There were 800 in the V12 navy program. I was a member of that group. We occupied the girls' dormitories (Welch, Roberts, Birch and Mary Lyon). I lived in Welch Hall with four roommates. Each dormitory was a separate unit and constituted its own social unit.

All the V12 trainees were engineers. The curricula consisted of electrical, mechanical, civil and aeronautical engineering. There was a training unit of diesel and electrical sailors and possibly a cooks and bakers unit. This group was about 5000 in number and occupied Friley and Hughes Halls. There was also a women's unit called the Curtiss Cadets which were slated to go to St. Louis to work in the aircraft industry.



V12s being served at the Memorial Union (photo from Rosie Grant)

So, during this period we had over 6000-7000 young people from all types of backgrounds and levels of educations from all over the country descend on this rather small town. If you consider that the majority could not get out of town even on weekends and were restricted to quarters most of the time, there was a lot of tension.

The V5 and V12 units were allowed some weekend liberty until an incident allowed weekend liberty only for those who lived within 50 miles of Ames. I was one of the fortunate ones so I would submit a list of names for my parents to invite home for the weekend every week. Of course, we never went home, we went to Des Moines, considered the best liberty town in the country with the insurance industry and the WAC base at Fort Des Moines.

If you could stand at the corner of Lincoln Way and Duff, you could see lines of hitchhiking sailors stretching off and on nearly to Huxley. Traffic was very light then because of gas and tire rationing. One of the requirements of hitchhiking was to memorize license plates with their county and the location of the county so that you didn't get stuck somewhere short of your destination. If you did, you could wait for hours on the side of the road.

At that time, Ames offered few attractions for the huge numbers of young people. However, I was quite well off in the V12 (victory in 12 years or we fight) unit. Our population consisted of engineering students who were being trained to be Navy officers after we had completed eight semesters of training. After eight semesters, degree or not, one went to midshipmen's school.

There were three 16-week semesters per year with leave between semesters. Thus you could finish in 32 calendar months.

The V12 population came from several places. The first group came from V1 or V7, the college reserve. This group enlisted while attending college, and was exempt from the draft. A second group came directly from high school as a result of interviews and a high score on the "Eddy" test. A third group came directly from the fleet or the marines.

If you were in good academic standing on 1 July 1943, this group was assigned to a V12 unit.

Engineers were sent to some university engineering program and liberal arts students were allowed 6 semesters and sent to other colleges.

Although all of the other military units in Ames were here for rather brief (8 weeks and up) periods, the V12 unit was almost like civilian resident students. In fact, even though we were under military discipline, and wore uniforms, life was remarkably similar to student life now, in that a group of very young men were mostly in their late teen with one real difference. If you got in either disciplinary trouble, you were out with no second chance. By out, I mean the fleet in short order.

As a result of this, I can truly say that this was the brightest group I have ever been associated with.

Even though the stakes were high for everyone, youthful exuberance could not be totally suppressed. A couple of incidents come to mind. First, each day had a physical component. One component was swimming. If

you could not learn to swim, you couldn't become a commissioned officer. This was desirable since your salary went from \$50 to \$216 per month with better chow and quarters.

Second was boxing. Every semester you got the privilege of being forced to enter a tournament. All participated, including former golden gloves champs and those of us who had never boxed before. We used 14-ounce gloves, but all you could do was to avoid being killed. If you ran, you were given demerits by the scourges of the program, the Chief Specialists (athletic). Those sadists were implacable.

The third wonderful athletic program was the Navy Standard Physical Fitness Test (Strength Test). If you got below 50 on their scale, you were placed in the weak squad. Those poor people got their tests monitored by the chiefs but the rest of us monitored each other, therefore we all passed every time.

Referring to the incidents, once, when we were playing touch football out east by squaw creek we killed an enormous bull snake. One sailor, Andy Swago sneaked it back to Welch Hall where the unit character lived. His name was Billo Freutel. Bill was always in disciplinary trouble, was a declared communist, and was frequently AWOL, which got the entire Welch unit in trouble. Anyway, with the snake in hand, we waited until Freutel went to sleep and laid it under the covers and on his chest. When he woke up, he went insane and never came out of it. He was separated from the Navy with a Section 8 medical discharge.

The other incident(s) was that the night watch had the duty of stealing the demerit cards of the day from Ensign Klepper's desk during the midwatch. This was always terrifying when it was your turn because such actions do not contribute to one's training to be an officer and a gentleman.

Of note are the problems and conditions of faculty life during this period. In physics and chemistry, there was large-scale work being done on the Manhattan project.

In the instructional end of things you had the ASTP on a quarter program, the regular civilian students on another quarterly program with different calendars, the V12 group on a semester program, the Curtiss people on another calendar with different courses, and the diesel and electric trainees on 8 and 16-week short programs, respectively.

Teaching loads were enormous with everyone on the faculty teaching from 2 - 4 different curricula. My





## Administrator's Column

### Allow Me to Introduce Myself!

By Colleen Hamilton

I'm the new administrator for the Ames Historical Society (AHS), but you should just call me Colleen!

I'm not an Ames native, but I have lived here all of my adult life, almost 30 years now (please don't do the math!). I'm so excited to be associated with the AHS and all the good work it's doing. It allows me to support a community that's given me so much over the years.

Some of the things I'm working on, with the ever-present support of our Board (often referred to as AHS's unpaid staff!) are:

- Partnering with local businesses on promotional events (ultimately promoting and benefiting both)
- Scheduling historical presentations that the AHS will offer on a monthly basis, beginning this fall.
- Obtaining grants in support of AHS's first-ever museum building.
- Encourage more volunteer support for our important projects.

In many ways, it appears that the AHS is one of Ames' best kept local secrets. I'd like to change that glaring oversight, to get the word out that not only is the AHS a highly respected organization, but it is already doing much to benefit the community.

Of course it will take all of us...the AHS Board, our caring and committed membership and me to move from that "best kept secret" status. Check out our website, [www.AmesHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.AmesHistoricalSociety.org) (which just celebrated its one-year anniversary!) and learn about projects for which you can volunteer. Let me know about a great grant opportunity you've heard about. Or ask us to provide an historical presentation to an organization to which you belong. Together, we can move AHS solidly into the prominent place in the community it so richly deserves!

So, it was great to meet you, and do keep in touch with your thoughts and good ideas. You're welcome to e-mail me at [administrator@ameshistoricalsociety.org](mailto:administrator@ameshistoricalsociety.org) or stop by our 108 5<sup>th</sup> Street headquarters to visit. My regular office hours are Wednesday and Friday afternoons from 1-5pm.

Thanks for your support! Have a safe and wonderful summer!

*Colleen Hamilton*, AHS Administrator

memory is that the quality of instruction and the extra efforts put out by the faculty and administration were excellent. As one example, one physics professor had groups of sailors over every Sunday evening for classical music and literary discussion. An Aeronautical-Mathematics professor ran Mathematics courses every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for advanced concepts for V12 sailors.

An English professor gave a series of talks on effective communication; it is obvious the value of this very practical information was to officers-to-be. As over-worked as all these people were, those of us who were fortunate enough to be stationed here will never forget their contribution to the education and training of the military on campus.



Those stationed here during the war years were very fortunate. Although most of us did not fit in too well and were somewhat unhappy at being caged, it was amazing how many of us came back later to live here, to finish our education and become part of this community.

It is truly amazing that this small town had the capacity and ability to provide a base for all the thousands of military personnel who passed through here. There were no riots or serious incidents. Ames can be proud of its contribution during that period and that includes both the University and the City.



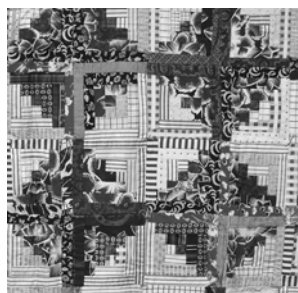
Historical footnote: The V-12 program was created to provide college-trained (a Navy prerequisite) officers for the projected invasion fleets. High school and college students and fleet personnel could qualify by national examination and the democratic nature of the selection process gave many young men a unique educational opportunity. The partnership between the Navy and 131 American colleges – including Iowa State – produced 60,000 officers, many of whom were commissioned at age 19 and found themselves immediately challenged in the art of leadership with no peacetime internship. From the civilian point of view, V-12 looked like a big break for anyone in 1 – a college education, room, board, uniforms, medical care – all free – plus \$50 a month! Not bad in 1943. But not really free either. The Navy, rightfully, got its payback from each trainee – 8 am classes, obstacle courses, swimming challenges, five-and-a-half day weeks and lines for chow.

Photos, this page & previous page: ISU Bomb yearbook, 1943

## Donations to the Collection

The number of donations received during 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2005 surpassed those of previous years. Highlights:

- Print of **Ames cityscape** by Bruce Loesch
- Ames High School **Spirit** yearbooks for 1924-1928; class programs 1927-1928
- **Victorbilt Toys** history, catalog & photos
- **Necktie quilt** in log cabin pattern (below)



- Ames builder, **W.F. Snook's** wooden hand screw clamps
- **Skateland** photos and advertising
- **Northwood School** archival materials
- **Roosevelt School** items
- Additions to **Mary Sterling** collection (Central Junior High & Kate Mitchell schools)
- **Washington Royals 4-H Club** historian books
- Additions to **Ringgenberg** collection (Carl's WWI correspondence, financial records)
- **City of Ames** equipment & construction contracts



Northwood School archival materials

## Deaccessions from the Collection

Some donated items that do not meet our acquisitions policy have been conveyed to more appropriate homes. The following items have been transferred:

- to Boone County Historical Society 19<sup>th</sup> century carte-de-visite family photos relating to Boone
- to Cambridge Historical Society - Sharp family photos and documents
- to Slater Historical Society - centennial coin
- to Story City Historical Society - a 1909 class photo at Rosendale School
- to First United Methodist Church History Library (Ames) - Methodist hymnals and sheet music

## Ames Tribune Photo Archive

An archival supply order for 4,000 unbuffered storage envelopes for the deteriorating 4 x 5" negatives was received in May and sleeving has begun. To increase the pace of processing as deterioration advances, negatives will not be searched against the microfilm edition of the Tribune. Brief notations of image subjects will be noted and identification numbers assigned, but the labor-intensive research will be resumed later. The negatives will be refrigerated to slow deterioration.

## Interactions

Walk-in traffic on open days is heavy. The annual Art Walk on June 3<sup>rd</sup> brought a steady flow of guests to 108 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Wonderful stories were told of Ames in former times, valuable contacts were made for future historical objects donations and patrons were exposed to our cramped quarters and see our need for space.

The curator took several workshops: "Techniques for Documenting Artifacts and Describing What is Observed" and "Applying Accessions Numbers to Museum Artifacts" by Upper Midwest Conservation Association at Iowa Falls, April 28, 29. "S.O.S. (Save Our Stuff)" was sponsored by Iowa Conservation and Preservation Consortium in Fort Dodge on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## AHS' Growing Website

Changes and additions occur weekly and are too numerous to list. Comments received, as well as the accompanying graph, show that usage is rapidly growing as users discover our site. The current size of the website has mushroomed to approximately 290MB. Key players gathered at a noon luncheon on June 29<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the first anniversary of the unveiling of our new website to the public. Amidst a plentitude of salads and pizza, sincere gratitude was expressed to:

- **Alan Spohnheimer, webmaster**  
In addition to our website, Alan's "babies" include North Central Iowa Bandmasters, ISU's Musica Antiqua, South Hamilton School, Karl King, and Tones of Florence. Alan's creativity can immediately be detected on these sites. He travels to Ames from his home in Ellsworth once a week to scan images, take digital pictures and make changes and additions to our website.
- **Joe Anderson, server provider**  
As an Assistant Scientist at Iowa State University, Joe provides technical computer support to the Dept. of Biochemistry, Biophysics & Molecular Biology. He makes his home-based server available

at no cost to AmesHistoricalSociety.org, happily increasing disk space as we grow (presently at about 290MB). Joe is also involved with AmesCommunity.net, a “loose association of people interested in the community-building aspects of technology.”

- **John Rose**, *email forwarding specialist*  
Blocking out ever expanding spam and keeping email forwarding current for the ever-changing web contacts are John’s contributions. At ISU he serves as a Systems Analyst with Academic Information Technology, an area undergoing a name change and merger as this newsletter goes to press.
- **Deborah Vance & John Rose**, *donors of the domain name registration*. While serving as an AHS Board member, Deb made the commitment to fund the annual domain name fee for us. She is employed as Program Coordinator with International Education Services on ISU campus, and perhaps obviously, is married to John Rose.
- **Sara Vouthilak**, *web photographer*  
Our own Collections Assistant is also a photographer of artifacts for our website and an artist in her own right. On April 30<sup>th</sup> she was awarded “Best of Show” for her oil painting, “Dark Passage,” at the Iowa Artists exhibition in Fort Dodge. We all wish her success with Dabble Books & More, a joint venture that opened mid-April in the VF Factory Outlet Mall at Story City.
- **Andy Tang & Sze-Wai Cheung**, *PC support*  
For the past five years, Andy and Sze-Wai have kept AHS computers, scanners and printers humming. As owners and operators of their home-based business, PC+, they have periodically upgraded our system and added peripherals. At the end of June, they installed a DSL modem to speed up internet access to on the Society’s computer.
- **Dennis Wendell**, *web content writer and editor*  
This guy hopefully needs no introduction! He started collecting antiques and practically everything else in grade school and has been at it ever since. After retiring from a 30-year career at Parks Library Dennis became collections curator at AHS. He spends his free time churning out hundreds of pages of content for the website that he dreamed up.



Ames builder, W.F. Snook’s hand screw clamps

## Ames Historical Society News

### Plan to Attend AHS Programs

- Sat. Sept. 17, 11am, Ames Public Library auditorium, 515 Douglas – **Notable Women in Ames History**, by Kathy Svec
- Sat. Nov. 12, 10am, Ames Public Library auditorium, 515 Douglas – **The Legacy of a One Room School**, by Carole Jensen

Talks are free and open to the public.

### City of Ames & County Grants

During the 2005-06 Ames City budgeting process, City Council was approached for a local option sales tax-funded grant similar to those received by other Ames cultural organizations. Council members favored the request, granting \$7500 to support facility costs associated with maintaining a historic collection. AHS is seeking larger quarters for its growing collections.

Story County’s Supervisors currently support county historical groups through local option sales tax funds. A request to be included in this funding was approved, providing \$2,100 to support basic Society operations.

### Lemonade From Lemons



In June, The Society received the Ames Community Arts Council’s “Lemonade from Lemons Creativity Award”. It is given to “an organization that met adversity with spunk and vigor”. The award recognized the tragic loss of the Bauge Log Home to arson and the plans now being negotiated to create a permanent exhibit for the surviving artifacts at McFarland Park.

### Ames Women’s Club Donation

The Ames Women’s Club enjoyed a presentation on the historic Lincoln Highway by Jeff Benson on May 9<sup>th</sup>. They provided a generous \$200 donation to AHS and the Iowa Chapter of the Lincoln Highway Association. The sum was divided equally between the two groups. The LHA portion will go to signage for the route across Iowa. The AHS portion will go toward a badly-needed scanner that will accommodate transparencies.

### History of the Ames Theater

The former Ames Theater building in campustown was remodeled last year by Kingland Systems. Kingland maintained many of the building’s features and restored the façade. They loaned AHS one of the former film poster display cases on the sidewalk for a history of theater entrepreneur, Joe Gerbracht, and the Ames Theater. Stop by the old theater and take a look at the exhibit, or see it on the Society’s website.

## MissionFish Benefits AHS

Ames Historical Society is now registered with MissionFish, a nonprofit service of the Points of Light Foundation that eBay Giving Works offers its users to support favorite causes. MissionFish helps non-profit organizations raise money through online auctions. Any eBay user can list an item for sale and donate the proceeds to AHS.

Here's how - go to [www.missionfish.org](http://www.missionfish.org). Find "browse non-profits" and click on "A", type in Ames Historical Society in the yellow box, hit "enter". Anyone can sell items on AHS' behalf, so clean out your basements and donate the profits to AHS! If 100% of the sale is donated the AHS, then eBay donates their fees as well. If you already know how to sell on eBay, think about donating some profits to AHS. As we learn more, we'll let you know too. Questions? Call Margaret Elbert, 515-233-1445.



### Ames Historical Society Member Benefit

10% off regularly priced books at  
**BIG TABLE BOOKS, 303 Main, Ames**  
Offer good to 9/30/05 by showing this newsletter.

### Ames Historical Society Member Benefit

10% off collector's reference books at  
**ANTIQUE AMES, 202 Main, Ames**  
Offer good by showing this newsletter.



## Still Seeking Help: Mayor Project

The Society is seeking one or more volunteer sleuths to find images and information on some or all of Ames' 37 mayors, with assistance from city staff and others who can provide information. Call 232-2148 if you're willing!

### It's time to renew for 2005.

Membership renewals for 2005 are due on the one-year anniversary of last year's payment -- though we accept your dues payment at any time.

We are excited about our programs for 2005 and our work toward a real facility. Your membership dollars make continued progress possible!

See the label on this newsletter for your anniversary date and the level at which you renewed or joined.

<b>Introductory - first year</b>	<b>\$10</b>
<b>Individual</b>	<b>\$25</b>
<b>Family</b>	<b>\$40</b>
<b>Friend</b>	<b>\$50</b>
<b>Sustaining</b>	<b>\$100</b>
<b>Benefactor</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<b>Patron</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>

**Additional amount** for Building Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_ or  
Operations Endowment \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send soon to:

**Ames Historical Society, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010**

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